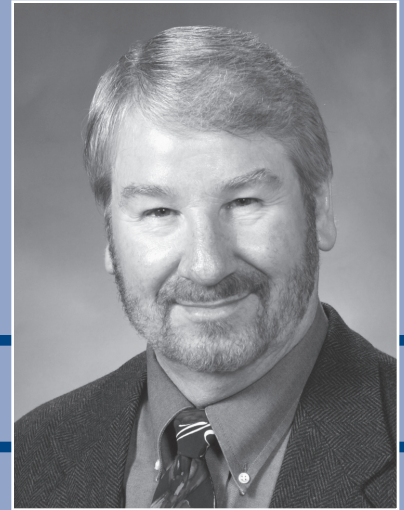


State Representative **Alex Wood**

Committees:

Commerce & Labor (*Vice Chair*)
Select Committee on Environmental Health
Transportation



State Representative
Alex Wood

3rd District

Contact Information:

Spokane Office:

315 W. Mission, Suite 20
Spokane WA 99201
(509) 568-3065

Olympia Office:

437B Legislative Building
Olympia WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7888

E-mail:

wood.alex@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

TDD:

1-800-635-9993

Home Page:

<http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/wood>

House of Representatives:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov>

State Web Page:

<http://access.wa.gov>

The Legislature at a Glance: 2007

Summer 2007

Dear friends and neighbors:

A couple of years ago, I mentioned in a newsletter that the Legislature had adjourned on time, and that it was the first time in more than a century that we'd done so in a budget year. That was 2005.

Well, the 2007 legislative session wrapped up this spring on time once again, and with a balanced budget, no new taxes, and record investments in schools, health care, the environment, the economy, and more.

In all, I have to characterize this as a great session, one of the most productive I've ever seen. Naturally, not every single bill that I care about managed to pass (and by the way, bills that did not pass this year are automatically in play again next year).

Towards the end of a session there is always a whittling-down process that takes place. On balance, though, this year was an outstanding one for kids and parents, employees and employers, teachers and schools, health and safety and other priorities people care about.

There's not room in this short newsletter to talk about everything your Legislature did, and how that might affect you and yours, but I can make a start here. For more information, please contact me or my legislative assistant.

I'd like to hear your comments, questions, criticisms and concerns.

As always, thanks for the privilege of serving as your state representative.

Sincerely,

Alex



"... a great session, one of the most productive I've ever seen."



The Legislature at a Glance: 2007

The Education Budget

I hear it over and over, when I'm here at home and when I'm over in Olympia: Education is the most important investment we can make. The biennial operating budget we crafted and passed this year reflects the priority the people of Washington place on education, from pre-kindergarten through post-graduate studies.

K-12

This new budget increases our investment in K-12 education by nearly 15 percent, and we're starting by putting resources where they can best help kids enter school, with our new state Department of Early Learning. We're also stepping up our schools' emphasis on math and science education, two areas where we've detected real problems. This doesn't just mean buying new textbooks and lab coats; the Legislature has funded a complete review of math and science curricula, with an eye toward rethinking what we teach and how we teach it.

Acknowledging the problems with math and science instruction, the Legislature took the controversial step of easing the requirement that students pass the math and science portions of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) before they can graduate from high school – but only while we are improving the curricula.



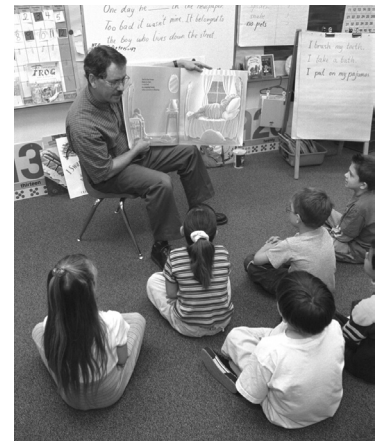
Simple Majority

Maintenance and operating levies for local schools currently require a super majority approval, meaning at least 60 percent of the voters have to vote 'yes' for the levy to pass. Responding to requests from parents, administrators, teachers and even students, the Legislature this year voted to send a constitutional amendment

to the state's voters this coming November, so the final decision is up to you.

If the amendment is approved, school levies will be able to pass with the same simple majority – 50 percent plus one vote – that democracies tradi-

tionally use to decide contested issues.



Higher Education

You may not have seen this, since it appeared in an out-of-state newspaper (*The Oregonian*), but the Legislature's support of higher education this year got a pretty good review from an objective source: "The Washington legislature finished a session of dazzling advances for that state's system. It increased Washington's enrollment by 9700 (including 3700 high-cost, high-demand engineering and science slots), limited tuition increases, and added \$86 million in new scholarship and grant aid."

I'll deal with the state's biennial capital budget in a separate item, but I want to mention here that more than \$1 billion is earmarked for renovation, repair and construction on college and university campuses, including \$58 million for a new biotechnology/life sciences building on WSU's Pullman campus.



Healthy Families

A healthy family starts with healthy kids. You may remember from an earlier newsletter that we Democrats set a goal of insuring every child in the state by the year 2010. This year we took a big step toward that goal by extending health insurance to 38,000 more children. We also set aside funds in the budget to beef up public health facilities statewide, to provide vaccines and dental care to more people, and to focus on mental-health care for children.





Representative Alex Wood • 3rd District

Easing the burden on our seniors

The Legislature acted this year to help keep our most vulnerable citizens from taking a hit because of a federal law that, ironically, was billed as being a boon to seniors. The Medicare Part D policy that kicked in last year actually imposed prescription co-pays on seniors who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid coverage. In Washington today, that's about 100,000 people. Our new state law eliminates that co-pay for these individuals. It will save them somewhere between \$25 and \$50 a month, depending on how many prescriptions they need to have filled.

A veterans' cemetery for Spokane

As a Vietnam veteran, I'm concerned about the fact that our state's nearest national cemetery is 280 miles west of Spokane, in Kent. When you consider that Eastern Washington is home to at least 140,000 veterans, the need for a final resting place for vets on this side of the Cascades is clear. I worked with Rep. Don Barlow as a co-sponsor of his successful bill this year to secure nearly

"Our state's nearest national cemetery is 280 miles west of Spokane."

\$8 million for a veterans' cemetery closer to home, easing the burden on families during an already difficult time. The location is still uncertain, but we know it will be in the Spokane metro area.



Capital Budget

This year's capital budget – the state construction budget – represents another great victory. As we have for the past several years, Eastern Washington, and Spokane in particular, did just fine in the capital budget.

I already mentioned the \$58 million that will be used to build the new biotechnology/life sciences building on WSU's Pullman campus. Here at home, more than two dozen Spokane projects will benefit from funding packages ranging from a few hundred thousand dollars all the way up to \$8 million for our new veterans' cemetery. Other significant beneficiaries are the YMCA/YWCA and the long-running Fox Theater renovation. A half dozen projects at Spokane Community College will receive more than \$6 million from the capital budget. Money also went to the Mobius Science Center, Avista Stadium ballpark, the East Central and Northeast Community Centers, the Whitewater Park, the Emmanuel Center, and many other projects, totaling more than \$20 million.



The Capital Budget – Line by Line, 3rd District

Dept. of Community, Trade, and Economic Development

N.A.T.I.V.E. Project, Community Wellness Center.....	\$375,000
The Salvation Army - Spokane, Family Services Resource Center.....	275,000
Spokane East Central Community Center.....	150,000
Spokane Emmanuel Center.....	470,000
Spokane Northeast Community Center.....	1,000,000
City of Spokane Minor League Baseball.....	2,000,000
Mobius Science Center.....	800,000

Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation

Spokane Whitewater Park.....	530,000
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Department of Veterans' Affairs

State Veterans Cemetery.....	7,825,000
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Eastern Washington State Historical Society

Building Management System.....	196,000
Campbell House Long-Term Preservation.....	402,000
Computer Catalog System.....	63,000
Museum Preservation.....	150,000
Security System and Technology Infrastructure.....	408,000
Storage and Exhibit Equipment for Collections.....	42,000

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Spokane Community College: Building 7 Renovation.....	1,009,000
Spokane Community College: Technical Education Building.....	2,393,000
Spokane Community College: Facility Preservation.....	643,500
Spokane Community College: Roof Repairs.....	595,100
Spokane Community College: Minor Works Program.....	929,900
Spokane Community College: Minor Works Preservation.....	648,800

Total 3rd Legislative District\$20,905,300



The Legislature at a Glance: 2007

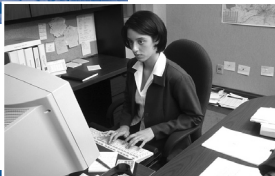
Helping Small Businesses Grow

One of my primary jobs in Olympia is serving as vice-chair of the House Commerce and Labor Committee. If you want to know what that entails, translate the committee's name into what it really means: business and jobs. I help lead that committee because so much of what we do there has a direct impact on people's lives. And even though the popular image is one that puts commerce and labor on two sides of a Berlin-type wall, the fact is what's good for one usually turns out to be in the best interest of the other as well, if the committee can design a good compromise.



This year we helped create job opportunities for thousands of Washingtonians. We strengthened key educational programs at the high school, community/technical college, and university levels, to give countless people the tools they need to land good jobs with good benefits, including expanding the apprenticeship programs and the state's skills centers. We became only the second state in the U.S. to institute

paid family leave to allow new parents to spend vital bonding time with the newest members of their families. We made it easier for employers in rural counties to take advantage of B&O tax incentives for creating new jobs.

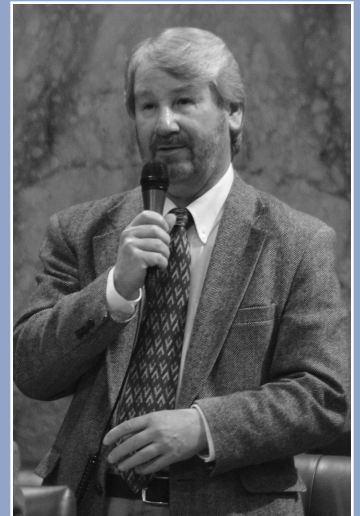


Turning to the business side, we reduced unemployment insurance rates for start-up businesses. This won't cut into the potential unemployment insurance benefits available to eligible workers . . . but by helping to cut the cost of opening new business doors, we can take away one of the stumbling blocks that can keep a business from thriving, and creating brand-new jobs. We also extended a program that helps small-business owners



challenge regulations that they consider unfair or overly burdensome. And in an effort to increase the number of productive businesses in the state, we increased by half our investment in a very successful program that offers low-cost loans to eligible businesses owned by women and/or minorities.

The Legislature made it a good year for business *and* workers. And finally, I want to mention that Spokane was featured recently (Apr. 23, 2007) in an issue of *Forbes* magazine devoted to "Best Places" in the U.S. to live *and to do business*. That's right. Our business climate right here in Spokane was rated one of the best in the country by the *Forbes* folks. We should all be very proud to see that.



I haven't been able to include information here on everything the 2007 Legislature dealt with. Transportation, health care and public safety are just a few topics that I could tell you more about if we weren't limited as to space. I know these are important to us all, and I hope you'll contact me with your questions and concerns about these and other legislative issues.

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P.O. Box 40600
Olympia WA 98504-0600

Alex Wood
State Representative